

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A luggage article comprising:
a storage compartment;
a first rolling means projecting from said storage compartment;

5 a wheeled panel mechanism including a pivotably mounted panel, said panel having second rolling means;

10 a handle operatively associated with said wheeled panel mechanism, said handle being movable between a retracted position and an extended position; and

means for selective deployment or nondeployment of said second rolling means when said handle is moved from said retracted position to said extended position.

15 2. The luggage article of Claim 1, wherein said wheeled panel mechanism includes a body portion and linkage means connecting said body portion to said pivotably mounted panel.

20 3. The luggage article of Claim 2, wherein said means for selective deployment or nondeployment of said second rolling means includes:

detent means operatively associated with said handle;

25 a slider mechanism movable in said body portion, said slider mechanism causing movement of said pivotably mounted panel between a deployed position where said second roller means are deployed and a nondeployed position where said second roller means are not deployed; and

30 a lockdown device for locking said slider mechanism so that said pivotably mounted panel remains in said nondeployed position when said handle is

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5 moved from said retracted position to said extended position, said detent means being operatively associated with said lockdown device in order to unlock said slider mechanism therefrom so that said slider mechanism can move and cause movement of said pivotably mounted panel from said nondeployed position to said deployed position.

10 4. The luggage article of Claim 3, wherein said handle includes a pair of spaced apart female tubes secured to a frame of said storage compartment; and

15 a pair of male tubes, each of which is slidably engaged in respective female tubes, said male tubes being joined by a gripping portion at one end thereof and having free ends opposite said gripping portion.

5. The luggage article of Claim 4, wherein said detent means includes:

20 a detent mechanism disposed in said free end of each of said male tubes, said detent mechanism including a detent housing and a movable detent disposed in said detent housing;

a button mounted in said gripping portion; and

25 first and second cables connecting said button to said respective movable detents such that movement of said button causes corresponding movement of both of said movable detents.

30 6. The luggage article of Claim 5, wherein said female tubes each include a longitudinal slot, said slider mechanism having opposed portions which engage into each said respective longitudinal slot, said detent housing engaging respective said opposed portions of said slider mechanism, whereby

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movement of said male tubes in said female tubes can cause corresponding movement of said slider mechanism in said body portion.

7. The luggage article of Claim 6, wherein
each of said female tubes includes a
separate lockdown device mounted therein, each said
lockdown device including a projection, said projection
having a slider mechanism engagement portion and a detent
engagement portion, said opposed portions of said slider
mechanism engaging against said respective slider
mechanism engagement portions when said slider mechanism
is locked;

said movable detent engaging against said
detent engagement portion and moving said projection in
order to unlock said slider mechanism from said lockdown
device when said pushbutton is engaged in order to move
said detent.

8. The luggage article of Claim 7, wherein
each said lockdown device includes a spring
that biases said respective opposed portions of said
slider mechanism against said respective slider mechanism
engagement portions; and

said linkage means includes at least one
spring that biases said pivotably mounted panel into said
deployed position, whereby unlocking said slider mechanism
will automatically move said pivotably mounted panel into
said deployed position.

9. The luggage article of Claim 8, including
a belt having a first end attached to said
body portion and a second end attached to said linkage
means, said belt being operatively associated with said
slider mechanism so that movement of said slider mechanism
causes movement of said linkage means.

10. The luggage article of Claim 9, including said slider mechanism includes a first roller;

a second roller mounted to said body portion;

a third roller spaced apart from said second roller and also mounted to said body portion; and said belt engaging against said first, second and third rollers in order to translate movement of said slider mechanism to movement of said pivotably mounted panel in order to move said pivotably mounted panel between said deployed position and said nondeployed position.

11. The luggage article of Claim 10, wherein said linkage means includes a first link and a second link, said first link is pivotably mounted to said panel and said second link and said second link is pivotably mounted to said first link and said body portion, whereby when said pivotably mounted panel is in said nondeployed position, said first and second links fold on top of each other and are disposed in a cavity formed by said body portion with said panel being overlaid thereon.

12. The luggage article of Claim 5, wherein each of said female tubes includes an opening, said movable detent being constructed to automatically engage into said opening when said handle is moved from said retracted position to said extended position thus locking said handle into said extended position; and

said movable detent disengages from said opening thus unlocking said handle in order to move said handle away from said extended position, said movable detent being disengaged when said button is moved.

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13. The luggage article of Claim 5, wherein said button includes:

a housing;

5 mounted in said housing, said first cable being attached to said first tab and said second cable being attached to said second cable; and

10 a pushbutton operatively associated with said first tab and said second tab, whereby movement of said pushbutton causes responsive movement of said tabs and thus said cables in order to move said movable detents.

14. The luggage article of Claim 13, wherein said tabs each include engagement openings
15 formed therein, said engagement openings including a sloped pilot surface;

20 said pushbutton includes a first projection having a pilot surface and a second projection having a pilot surface, said pilot surfaces of said projections engaging against said pilot surfaces of said engagement openings taken said pushbutton is pushed in so that said tabs are drawn towards each other in order to move said cables and thus said movable detents.

25 15. The luggage article of Claim 14, including a pushbutton spring biasing said pushbutton in a first position wherein said movable detent projects from said male tube.

30 16. The luggage article of Claim 5, wherein said button is a spring biased pushbutton which engages a camming means when said pushbutton is pushed down, said camming means rotating about a pivot point and causing responsive movement of said cable.

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17. The luggage article of Claim 1, wherein said second roller means is a caster.

18. The luggage article of Claim 17, wherein said caster comprises:

5 a caster frame rotatably attached to said wheeled panel mechanism;

10 a wheel axially rotatably mounted to said caster frame, said wheel having an axis of rotation generally perpendicular to an axis of rotation of said caster frame; and

15 said caster frame being (i) freely rotatable about its axis of rotation when said wheel bears against a surface and (ii) oriented in a predetermined position when said wheel is not bearing against said surface.

19. The luggage article of Claim 18, wherein said wheeled panel mechanism includes guiding means, a portion of said caster frame being guided by said guiding means when said wheel is lifted from said surface so as to position said caster frame in said predetermined position.

20. The caster of Claim 19, wherein said caster frame includes a rod extending from said wheel through said guiding means, said rod including a pin; and

25 said guiding means being constructed and arranged for guiding said pin to orient said wheel and said wheel frame in said predetermined position.

21. The caster of Claim 20, wherein said guiding means has a V-shape cross-section for guiding said pin.

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22. The caster of Claim 21, wherein
said retractable portion includes a biasing
means to bias said wheel and said caster frame into said
predetermined position when said wheel is not bearing
against said surface.

23. The caster of Claim 18, wherein
said caster frame includes (i) a swivel and
(ii) a wheel frame connecting said swivel with said wheel,
said wheel frame being pivotably mounted to said swivel
so that when said retractable portion is stored, said
wheel and said caster frame can be positioned so as to
occupy less space than a wheel and caster frame without
said pivotably mounted plate.

24. A wheeled panel mechanism for use in
association with an article including a handle movable
between a retracted position and an extended position,
said wheeled panel mechanism including a pivotably mounted
panel having a rolling means, said rolling means being
selectively deployed or not deployed when said handle is
moved from said retracted position.

25. The mechanism of Claim 24, wherein
said wheeled panel mechanism includes a
body portion and linkage means connecting said body
portion to said pivotably mounted panel.

26. The mechanism of Claim 25, wherein
said wheeled panel mechanism includes a
slider mechanism movable in said body portion, said slider
mechanism causing movement of said pivotably mounted panel
between a deployed position where said rolling means are
deployed and a nondeployed position where said rolling
means are not deployed.

27. The mechanism of Claim 26, including
a belt having a first end attached to said
body portion and a second end attached to said linkage
means, said belt being operatively associated with said
5 slider mechanism so that movement of said slider mechanism
causes movement of said linkage means.

28. The mechanism of Claim 27, including
said slider mechanism includes a
first roller;
10 a second roller mounted to said body
portion;
a third roller spaced apart from said
second roller and also mounted to said body portion; and
said belt engaging against said first,
15 second and third rollers in order to translate movement
of said slider mechanism to movement of said pivotably
mounted panel in order to move said pivotably mounted
panel between said deployed position and said nondeployed
position.

29. The mechanism of Claim 28, including
said linkage means includes a first link
and a second link, said first link is pivotably mounted
to said panel and said second link and said second link
is pivotably mounted to said first link and said body
25 portion, whereby when said pivotably mounted panel is in
said nondeployed position, said first and second links
fold on top of each other and are disposed in a cavity
formed by said body portion with said panel being overlaid
thereon.

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30. A luggage article including a handle movable from a retracted position to an extended position, said handle including detent means comprising:

5 a detent mechanism including a detent housing and a movable detent;

a button mounted in said handle; and

10 a cable connecting said button to said detent such that movement of said button causes corresponding movement of said movable detent which in turn permits movement of said handle from said extended position to said retracted position.

31. The luggage article of Claim 30, wherein said handle includes a pair of spaced apart female tubes secured to a frame of said luggage article; and

15 a pair of male tubes, each of which is slidably engaged in respective female tubes, said male tubes being joined by a gripping portion at one end thereof and each having a free end opposite said gripping portion.

32. The luggage article of Claim 31, wherein each of said female tubes includes an opening, said detent being constructed to automatically engage into said opening when said handle is moved from said retracted position to said extended position thus locking said handle into said extended position; and

25 said detent disengages from said opening thus unlocking said handle in order to move said handle away from said extended position, said detent being disengaged when said button is moved.

33. The luggage article of Claim 30, wherein said button is a spring biased pushbutton which engages a camming means when said pushbutton is

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pushed down, said camming means rotating about a pivot point and causing responsive movement of said cable.

34. A caster for an item including a retractable portion, said caster comprising:

a caster frame attached to said retractable portion;

a wheel rotatably mounted to said caster frame; and

said wheel and said caster frame being (i) freely rotatable about an axis of rotation generally perpendicular to an axis of rotation of said wheel mounted in said caster frame when said wheel bears against a surface and (ii) oriented in a predetermined position when said wheel is not bearing against said surface.

35. The caster of Claim 34, wherein said retractable portion including guiding means, a portion of said caster frame being guided by said guiding means when said wheel is lifted from said surface so as to position said caster frame in said predetermined position.

36. The caster of Claim 35, wherein said caster frame includes a rod extending from said wheel through said guiding means, said rod including a pin; and

said guiding means being constructed and arranged for guiding said pin to orient said wheel and said wheel frame in said predetermined position.

37. The caster of Claim 36, wherein said guiding means has a V-shape cross-section for guiding said pin.

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38. The caster of Claim 37, wherein
said retractable portion includes a biasing
means to bias said wheel and said caster frame into said
predetermined position when said wheel is not bearing
against said surface.

39. The caster of Claim 34, wherein
said caster frame includes (i) a swivel and
(ii) a wheel frame connecting said swivel with said wheel,
said wheel frame being pivotably mounted to said swivel
so that when said retractable portion is stored, said
wheel and said caster frame can be positioned so as to
occupy less space than a wheel and caster frame without
said pivotably mounted plate.

40. A caster for an item, said caster
comprising:
a caster frame rotatably attached to said
item;
a wheel axially rotatably mounted to said
caster frame, said wheel having an axis of rotation
generally perpendicular to an axis of rotation of said
caster frame; and
said caster frame being (i) freely
rotatable about its axis of rotation when said wheel bears
against a surface and (ii) oriented in a predetermined
position when said wheel is not bearing against said
surface.

41. The caster of Claim 40, wherein
said item includes guiding means, a portion
of said caster frame being guided by said guiding means
when said wheel is lifted from said surface so as to
position said caster frame in said predetermined position.

42. The caster of Claim 41, wherein
said caster frame includes a rod extending
from said wheel through said guiding means, said rod
including a pin; and

5 said guiding means being constructed and
arranged for guiding said pin to orient said wheel and
said caster frame in said predetermined position.

43. The caster of Claim 42, wherein
said guiding means has a V-shape
10 cross-section for guiding said pin.

44. The caster of Claim 43, wherein
said retractable portion includes a biasing
means to bias said wheel and said wheel frame into said
predetermined position when said wheel is not bearing
15 against said surface.

45. The caster of Claim 40, wherein
said caster frame includes (i) a swivel and
(ii) a wheel frame connecting said swivel with said wheel,
said wheel frame being pivotably mounted to said swivel
20 so that when said retractable portion is stored, said
wheel and said caster frame can be positioned so as to
occupy less space than a wheel and caster frame without
said pivotably mounted plate.

46. A pushbutton device for a mechanism
25 including a movable detent having attached thereto a
cable, said cable being attached to a camming means, said
pushbutton device including a spring biased pushbutton
that engages said camming means when said pushbutton is
pushed down, said camming means rotating about a pivot
30 point and causing responsive movement of said cable and
said movable detent.

~~47.~~ The device of Claim 46, wherein
said mechanism includes a pair of movable
detents each having attached thereto a separate cable,
each of said cables being attached to a separate camming
means.

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